Vedānta Darśana

Sri Sri Satchidanandendra Saraswati

Part: According to Ādi Śaṅkarācārya

Editor/Interpretation: Brahmachari Sutejas (Hishiryo)
sutejas@vedantacorpus.org
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ओं नमो ब्रह्मादिभ्यो ब्रह्मविद्यासंप्रदायकर्तृभ्यो |
वंशर्षिभ्यो नमो महद्भ्यो नमो गुरुभ्यः ||

Dedicated to Adi Śaṃkarācārya Bhagavatpāda

TOPICS

Preface

1. Introduction
2. Anubandha Catuṣṭaya
3. Brahman and the World
4. Brahman and Jiva
5. Brahmātmajñāna
6. Upāsana
7. Muktisādhana - Means to Liberation (Mukti)
8. Phalavicāra- Discussion on the results

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Preface

The Acharyas from all the three branches (of Vedanta viz. advaita, viśistādvaira, and dvaita) have commented on the Brahmsūtra, and they differ. The number of sūtras [among the different Acharya's commentaries] and the division of topics [adhikaraṇāni] are different. These details are not explained in this brief overview. The references to the sutras, sections, and parts are given according to the respective Acharya. I have written this brief explanation in the hope that the readers will get a broad overview from these three well-known Acharyas.

1. Introduction

Vedānta means the Upanishads. There are three main parts of Vedas namely Samhita, Brahmana and Araṇyaka. Upanishad is part of the scriptures that examines [the nature of] Atman in Araṇyaka. Doesn't the term "*Vedānta*" imply the end of the Vedas? Since the Upanishads are mostly contained in Araṇyakas viz. the concluding part of the Vedas, they are called Vedānta. The essence of the Upanishads is also found in the Bhagavad Gita. Hence the Gita is also referred to as Bhagavadgītopaniṣat. What principle is taught in the Upanishads and Gita? Is the teaching reasonable and compatible with [own's] experience? How can one attain that knowledge? What is the benefit of attaining it? The scriptures/philosophy [addressing these fundamental questions of life] is called Vedānta darśana [or short, Vedānta].
In the Land of Bhārata, there are six kinds of darśanas (philosophies) among those who accept Vedic authority.
They are: Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Purva Mīmāṃsā, Uttara Mīmāṃsā - these are the six darśanas popularly known as Ṣaḍdarśana. The last two mainly discuss deliberations on the mantras in the Vedas [vedavākyani], hence they are called Mīmāṃsā. But the sixth darśana, Uttaramīmāṃsa is known as Vedānta darśana because it deals primarily with the essence of the Vedāntas, i.e., the Upanishads.

The Brahma Sutras

Revered Bādarāyaṇācārya has composed the Vedānta [view, *darśana*] in 555 Sutras. A sutra is a sentence that conveys the essence of a topic in a brief manner without leaving any doubt. The Vedānta Sutras are also called Brahma Sutras because the Supreme Principle mentioned in the Upanishads is termed 'Brahma' [i.e., Brahman]. The Upanishads, the Gita, and the Brahma Sutras are collectively called the Prasthānatraya because the essence of what has been said in the Upanishads is also stated in the Gita and likewise [explained] in the Brahma Sutras through reasoning. Prasthāna is a path/system of expounding the Tattva, the purpose of this book. Just as the Upanishads and the Gita are in Sanskrit, the Brahma Sutras were also written in that language. Even those who understand Sanskrit find it tough to grasp the meaning of Brahma Sutras which are very brief, therefore, prominent Acharyas have written commentaries on these sutras. Śrī Saṃkarācārya, Śrī Rāmānujācārya, Śrī Madhvācārya, who are well-known in the Southern part of Bhārata - the commentaries [bhāṣyāṇi] of these three are now spread all over our country. Many people in this country trust these three Acharyas, but a lot of them do not understand Sanskrit. Thus, books in local languages are necessary for such people. In this short treatise we explain the essence of Vedānta darśana according to Śrī Saṃkarācārya. But in the appendix, we have also briefly provided the views of two other Acharyas.

Point of examination:

Examining and delving deeply into Vedānta darśana is beneficial for *jijñāsus* [those desirous of knowing the Truth]. The main principle that Vedānta darśana addresses is called Brahman [i.e., the Absolute Reality]. Vedānta proclaims that this whole universe is Brahman and that our Self is Brahman, everyone's true nature [*svarūpam*]. The same principle (i.e., Brahman) is also stated in the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. The first part, which deals with teaching in accordance with reason and our experiences [yuktyanubhava], can be called the Tattavichara Bhāga.

(1) In the first part of the Brahma Sutras, it is shown that the statements expressed in the Upanishads [vedāntavākya] mainly point to Brahman itself. Therefore, this chapter is called *Samanvaya Adhyāya*.
(2) In the second part, it is shown that Vedānta darśana is not against reasoning [yukti]. Hence this chapter is called *Avirodha Adhyāya*.
(3) In Vedanta philosophy, it is taught that those who cannot directly and completely understand [recognize] Brahman through contemplation, can attain preparedness by worshipping it. This teaching can be termed as the second instruction of Vedānta. The portion that includes these teachings may be called Upasana Bhāga. Who is eligible for the knowledge of Brahman and who for worshipping Brahman? On what mental level is someone qualified for *jñānōpāsana*? This part also expounds what we must do to

acquire this eligibility. Since all this is explained in the third part of the Brahma Sutras, it is called *Sādhana Adhyāya.*

(4) Similarly, if we understand and incorporate Vedānta darśana into our thoughts and actions, what benefit do we receive? The part which states that can be called Prayojana Bhāga. This is what is discussed in the fourth part of the Brahma Sutras. Hence, it is called *Phala Adhyāya.*

Each part of the Brahmasutras is divded into four padas -- We do not explain here the subsections of the topics in each pada. Moreover, the topics within each chapter are not introduced in any particular sequence. It is only an attempt to give the reader a broad introduction to Vedānta darśana in the three sections we have mentioned so far: Tattavichara, Upasana and Prayojana-Bhāga.

2. Anubandha Catuṣṭaya

What is Anubandha?

Before embarking on the study of any scripture, one poses these four kinds of questions to oneself. For whom is this written? What subject does it deal with? What is the relation of this text to other scriptures etc.? What is the benefit or result of studying this? [prayojana]?
If a scripture/text provides satisfying answers to these four questions, one should study it, otherwise not. Therefore,

every text should provide answers related to these four queries. These answers are termed as *Anubandhas*.

1. Eligibility for Knowledge (adhikāritvam):

If we first tell a little about these connections (*Anubandhas)* and then expand on them [separately], it is easier for the inquirer to understand the whole subject. Hence, we'll provide a succinct overview of these four 'Anubandhas'. The first sutra of the Brahma Sutras is ‘athāto brahmajijñāsā’. This sutra consits of four words ‘atha’, ‘ataḥ’, ‘brahma’, ‘jijñāsā’. Among these words, ‘Atha’ indicates adhikāritvam.
***Brahmavicāra* should be done only after one has acquired all these necessary qualities** [*adhikāritvam*]. The primary benefit of this knowledge is not available to others.
These are:
(a) Discrimination between what is eternal and what is ephemeral [*nityānityavastuvivekaḥ*].
(b) Dispassion [*vairāgya*], where the mind does not hanker for desires to enjoy their fruits in this world or the next.
(c) The six-fold qualities called śama, dama, uparati, titiksha, śraddha and samādhāna [*ṣaṭsampad*].
(d) There must be intense longing for mokṣa [*mumukṣutvam*].

According to Vedānta, those endowed with these four qualities are eligible for Brahmavicāra. This is the conclusion.

It seems reasonable that those who do not have the competence [adhikāritvam] to reflect on the Upanishads [upaniṣadvākya] have no competence in this matter. Since in the Brahma Sutra [1.3.34-38, i.e., apaśūdra-adhikaraṇam] it is mentioned that only he who has studied the Vedas and understood the principle [i.e., Brahman], a twice-born one [dvija] alone has the competence for Brahmavidyā, as mentioned in the Shastras. The Shudras do not have this competence because the study of Vedas is absent. But we have already said that the main purpose of Vedānta darśana is to recognize that Brahman is the Self of all. Here a doubt arises: Can it be said that they [e.g., the Shudras] are not capable of enquiring into Atman, i.e., the true nature of their own selves? This doubt seems valid. Therefore, even though there is no competence to realize [recognize] the principle of the Self through the Vedas [Upanishads i.e., *vedāntavākya*], they too can intuit the ultimate truth of their own Self [Atman] with the help of a [competent] teacher, their [own] experiences by reading the wisdom of the Puranas [*itihāsapurāṇādi*] etc.

Therefore, while studying the Vedas may offer added benefits in this regard, everyone has the right to inquiry into Brahman. [*brahmavicāra*]. However, it is certain that without the already mentioned qualities such as Viveka and Vairāgya etc., no one will be capable of inquiring into on Brahman or obtaining the benefit from it. The numbers given here indicate the chapter

[adhyāya], pāda and sūtra of the Brahma Sutras respectively. The format will continue in this way.

2. Subject-Matter (viṣaya):

In the Vedānta Shastras, Brahman is the only subject-matter of inquiry. Since Brahman is our true Self [i.e., Being], everyone is [truly] Brahman. Brahman is not something very unknown. But who am I? People attribute various meanings to the term "I" such as body, senses, mind, intellect, individuality [*jīvatva*]. Among these, which one truly represents "I"? Those who do not deliberate on this cannot attain true happiness but suffer. Therefore, we should inquire into the true nature of the Self. Atman is not a *Samsari*, i.e., it is intrinsically free from actions and reaping [their] results. The Vedantists declare that the Self [Atman] is Brahman, the all-pervading Supreme Self, the essence of all [jīvas etc.]. Knowing this, there is no reason to be sad. Thus, there is an opportunity to become truly happy. Therefore, it is essential to ponder: What is the true nature of our Self [Atman]?

3. Benefit (prayojana):

It is the knowledge [ultimate intution] that arises from this inquiry. Brahmavicāra is beneficial because this knowledge is the realization [i.e. ultimte intution] of our self, which is ever-present bliss [*nityānandasvarūpa*] and ever attained. This ultimate goal [*paramaprayojana*] is called Mukti (BrS. 3-4-52). Those who are not competent to realize Brahman directly will

gradually be liberated through Upasana. Therefore, whoever is an Adhikāri must proceed with Brahmavicāra.

4. Relation (sambandha):

Here the relationship needs to be understood from multiple ways. For the Shruti says that actions [karma] produces ephemeral results and it also says the highest human pursuit i.e., liberation [*mukti*] is attained through knowledge alone. Therefore, those who have studied the Vedas that deal with karma etc., as well as those who have not, if they are competent [*adhikāritvam*] should inquire into Brahman. The knowledge of the Entity [i.e., Absolute Reality] certainly arises from proper inquiry. Through this knowledge, one attains eternal happiness. Consequently, the Adhikāri should deliberate on the Vedānta sentences [*vedāntavākya vicāra*]. Those without competence should at least learn the subject-matter from the Puranas, etc. and engage in philosophical contemplation. Through this, they will achieve self-realization and attain the ultimate human goal [paramapuruṣārtha].

3. Brahman and the World

The relationship between Brahman and the [apparent] world:

It is [deliberately] said in the Upanishads that Brahman is the cause of the world/universe [from the standpoint of adhyāropa]. This world is bound by time, space, and causation

and manifests as the result of actions, instruments (kāraka) and their effects [kriyākārakaphala]. There are numerous living beings in it who perform actions and experience their fruits. Whether through direct perception, inference, or scripture, it is understood from Shruti that Brahman is the cause behind the creation, sustenance, and dissolution of this observable universe (BrS. 1-1-2). This very Brahman is our soul (Atman). The Upanishads understood that Brahman is also the cause of time and space, as It is the cause of the world which is made up of them. However, since every created entity must originate in space and at some point, in time, a doubt arises: How can we understand the origination of space and time? Everything that appears distinct is a result of some effect. Since time and space appear differentiated, it is reasonable to say they too must be the result of some effect (BrS. 2-1-7). So how can we conceptualize the original state from which entities like space, etc. arise? The spaceless state [*anākāśa*] can be imagined similarly to (states like) deep sleep, and thus, one can conceptualize a state without space. Therefore, Brahman is the cause behind everything, including space and the world, etc. The universe emerges from Brahman, exists in Brahman, and eventually dissolves back into Brahman (BrS. 1-1-2).

Since Brahman is *jagatkāraṇa* [cause of this world/universe], we should not understand that it indicates Brahman existed first, and then the universe came into being. Because, words like 'first' and 'then' are indicative of time. Time too, as

mentioned earlier, is an effect of Brahman. Similarly, since space is also an effect of Brahman, we should not imagine that Brahman exists in one place and space in another. Because there isn't a separate space outside of the space that exists. Therefore, Brahman is the Reality which is not bound by time and space. The effects called time and space are not really objects in space and time. It means that they are not different from Brahman. The world is the effect of Brahman, which implies that it isn't [really] distinct from Brahman (BrS. 2-1-14). Empirically speaking [*vyavahārika dṛṣṭi*], Brahman is called the world.

Objections concerning Brahman as the cause of the world:

But is it reasonable to say that Brahman is the cause of the world? If we agree that Brahman is our Self, then it implies that our Self itself is the cause of the world. Brahman is [pure] Consciousness, while the world is inert. The effect cannot be different from the cause. Those who disagree must admit that gold ornaments can also be made from mud. If the world merges into Brahman, the flaws of the world will also stick to Brahman. Since there is no division in Brahman, it can be argued that a separated world shouldn't emerge from it. If Brahman itself is the world, then there is no difference between living beings and the objects [i.e., names and forms] they experience.

If the Self itself is Brahman, it implies that the Self willingly creates a world that binds and makes it experience the sufferings of existence. Claiming Brahman creates the world without any material is contrary to experience. If we say that Brahman itself has become the world, then it implies Brahman doesn't exist now. Furthermore, the Self is of the nature of pure Consciousness [*cetanarūpa*]; it can't be the material cause of anything. The Samkhyas opine that the inert Pradhāna, separate from Brahman, is the cause of the world. Vaisheshika says that “atoms” [paramāṇu] are the cause of the world. Both assert and maintain their opinions, and many others have various views, all of which seem contradictory to this argument.

How, then, can we accept that Brahman is the cause of the world? Sri Bādarāyaṇa reconciles. The gist of his answer is: There is no rule that the effect must not be different from its cause. For example, from the human body, hair, nails, etc. are born; Inert cowdung gives rise to living worms. Similarly, the world, which is [apparently] different from Brahman, could arise from Brahman. If we need a rule, that there must be something similar between effect and cause, then the quality [nature] of existence (or IS-ness) which is present in Brahman is also present in the world, isn’t it? Therefore, we say that there is no deficiency in our thought (BrS. 2-1-6). If the effect merges into the cause, it does not mean that the properties of the effect should also be found in the cause. There is no

example of the properties of (clay) pots and (clay) jars merging back into clay being transferred to the clay; Or when (gold) ornaments merge back into gold, their characteristics don't transfer to the gold. So, we say that the effect is not [really] different from the cause. How then can we object that cause is appearing as effect? [In this sense] it is not appropriate to raise the objection that Jīvas and objects, etc., are [essentially] different, as the effects of the ocean, such as wave, foam, etc., are not different from the ocean. Nor is it proper to argue that Brahman who is the Self has created a world harmful to Itself because we do not say that the [*sāṃsārika*] Jīva is the cause of the world.

What people commonly understand as their Self [Atman] is the physical body, prāṇa, antaḥkaraṇa, etc, also known as śārīra, Jīva, Vijñānātma. The Atman, conditioned by limited adjuncts [*upādhiparicchinna*], is not the cause of the world, because the real nature of Atman which is Brahman is different from the Jīva. In this context, there are many references in the scriptures that say that Brahman is not Jīva. (BrS. 2-4-20, 1-1-21, 1-1-31, 1-2-20, 1-2-22, 1-3-4, 1-3-12, 1-3-18, 1-4-17). Our true nature is omniscient, omnipotent, eternally pure, ever liberated [*nityaśuddhabuddhamuktasvabhāva*]. It is devoid of worldly notions like doership, etc. (BrS. 2-1-22, 3-4-8). Shruti also does not mention the Jīva as the cause of the universe. Nor is it valid to claim that an effect came into being without material. For example, "milk becomes curd",

“devatās attaining nāmarupa by mere intention (sankalpa)”, etc. are found in the world.

If Brahman had become the world, then Brahman itself could not have continued to exist. The objection is contrary to Sruti. In the Sruti it is said that Brahman appearing as the world is not his true form [pūrṇarūpa]. It is not possible to argue that Brahman cannot appear as the world. Moreover, if cause and effect [*kāryakāraṇabhāva*] were paramārthika, i.e., if cause and effect really took place, the objection would have held. But this is not the case. In Brahman, names and forms are imagined due to ignorance [*avidyā*]. Those names and forms [nāmarūpe] took on two forms, vyākṛta [differentiated] and avyākṛta [undifferentiated]. Names and forms cannot be referred to either as different or nondifferent from Brahman. For Brahman is pure Consciousness, and names and forms are impure and inert. But they are imagined in Brahman itself, and there are no names and forms independent of Brahman. Hence name and forms are not different from Brahman. Because of this relation of these [imagined] names and forms, Brahman is considered as the cause while the world is spoken of as effect. In its true nature, Brahman is devoid of change (BrS. 2-1-27). It would be reasonable to say that Brahman creates the world without any modification like a person [jīva] creates a world while dreaming (BrS. 2-1-28). Thus, there is no fault when Sruti speaks of Brahman being the cause of the world. But we also agree that this argument is contrary to the

logic of Sankhyas and others. But [their] arguments are opposed to Sruti and reasoning.

This is shown in the first and second chapters of the Brahma Sutras. Therefore, Brahman is indeed the cause of the world. Brahman is referred to as the cause of the world, with cause and effect not [really] being different, in order to point to the supreme cause [paramakāraṇa], i.e., the non-dual Brahman, and not to indicate that the world originated. The intention, Sruti speaks of "creation" etc. [sṛṣṭi] is not to establish that it is actual real, but as a means to deliberate on the non-dual Brahman. Therefore, even if there appears to be any contradiction in the texts speaking of creation, there is no harm (BrS. 1-4-14).

4. Brahman and Jiva

Jīva is not an effect of Brahman:

Just as the objective [external] world arises from Brahman, so does the world within us. This means that the body, senses, prana, mind, these are all caused by Brahman (Br.S. 2-3-15, 2-3-16, Brahman and Prana Br.S. 2-4-1, 2-4-8). However, the true nature of a Jīva [Atmasvarūpam] is devoid of birth and death. Notions such as 'such a person is born', 'such a person dies', etc., – from the empirical standpoint of the limited adjunct [upādhi] called body appears and passes away.

In reality, no one has witnessed the birth or death of a Jīva [Atmasvarūpam]. The Jīva is not [really] an effect of Brahman. Just as space [*ākāśa*], air [*vāyu*], etc. arise from Brahman and appear in different ways [forms], so too the Jīva appears [as born] and disappears [dies]. In some Srutis it is said that a Jīva is born like a spark from fire, but they do not imply actual birth. For in the Sruti it is said that a Jīva [i.e., Atmasvarūpam] is eternal and without birth. Just as space [*ākāśa*], time [*kāla*], etc. differ from each other, shouldn't we therefore accept that living beings [Jīvas] also differ from each other? It is not so. Because the true nature of a Jīva is devoid of divisions. Just as the space within a pot or a building appears divided due to the limiting adjuncts or "upādhis" of the pot and building, respectively, so also the “Jīva, the mind/intellect”, etc. appear divided due to these upādhis. Hence, it is incorrect to argue that a Jīva is an effect of Brahman. Therefore, the shruti statements saying that Jīvas emerge like sparks from fire mean they only appear to be born [*upādhinimitta*]. Just as the spark is essentially the same as fire, the true nature of a Jīva is *Caitanyasvarūpam* [nature of pure Consciousness]; that is what the Shruti implies. This is inferred from the scriptural statement which speaks of ‘Brahman having created and entered the world.’ Therefore, [the notion of] a Jīva is only an appearance due to limited adjunct [upādhi], not really an effect of Brahman (BrS. 2-3-17).

All empirical dealings are AdhyAsika:

Hence the birth of a living being, performing actions, transmigrating with his subtle body, experiencing the fruits of his deeds, traveling to other realms etc. all these appear due to upādhis (BrS. 2-3-19, 2-3-33, 2-3-48). They don't affect the true nature of a Jīva. The inner instrument known as the mind or "antaḥkaraṇa", although not ultimately real, is attributed to Atman due to ignorance [*ajñāna*]. This association remains as long as one lives in the sphere of Samsara. In conditions such as deep sleep, death, dissolution, a Jīva seems non-existent but reappears within time [thereafter], (BrS. 2-3-30, 2-3-31, 4-2-8). Due to this superimposition, the sense of agency and enjoyership are superimposed on Atman.

This is [also the reason] why, even after experiencing the merits and demerits of the past, he is reborn according to the [accumulated] karma at the time of death (BrS. 3-1-8, 3-1-11). All the empirical and religious dealings [*laukikavaidika-vyavahāra*] are from the standpoint of ignorance [*avidyādṛṣṭi*], which fails to discriminate between upādhis and own's true nature [ātmasvarūpam]. Through the Lord's grace, when a Jīva contemplates and [thereby] negates the limited adjuncts [upādhis], starting with the body etc., he recognizes what he has always been, his true nature [saccidānandasvarūpam], which is the supreme knowledge of the identity between Atman and Brahman (BrS. 3-2-5 and BrS. 3-2-6).

The sense of difference between the Lord viz. Ishvara and the individual soul [*jīva*], as between a teacher and his disciple, is from the standpoint of superimposition [*adhyāsa dṛṣṭi*]. Due to contact with limited adjuncts, all the injunctions and prohibitions mentioned in the scriptures with reference to a person are based on superimposition [*adhyāsa*], (BrS. 2-3-48). From this viewpoint, a Jīva appears to be a part of the Supreme Self, (BrS. 2-3-43). Nevertheless, the joys and sorrows of a Jīva do not affect Parameshwara, for they are made of ignorance [*avidyākṛta*]. Since a Jīva is like a reflection of Brahman (BrS. 2-3-50) the sorrows do not affect Brahman. Also, the joys and sorrows of one Jīva do not affect another.

5. Brahmātmajñāna

Examination of the Three States - Avasthātraya parikṣā

The practice of examining the three states [*avasthātraya parikṣā]* is a helpful means of negating the nature of the [manifold] upādhis. For instance, just as in the waking state, the dream state presents its own world and body, etc. even though they appear real, they are all illusory (BrS. 3-2-3). This is because space, time, and causality of waking is not experienced in that state, nor can they be asserted with certainty to always remain as they appear. The space-time causality there is not the same as in the waking state. They are distinctly different and upon waking, they are understood to be mere appearances. The scriptures and wise state that

dreams might indicate some outcomes that could manifest in the waking state; however, nobody believes that what appears in that state (dream) is genuinely real. Consequently, it becomes obvious that the association of the soul (*jīva*) with adjuncts (*upādhis*) are not permanent.

If we discard the dream and examine deep-sleep, there is no cognition of objects and no association with a body, senses etc. Just as a carpenter can be called a carpenter if he uses tools such as chisels, but if he does not use them, he is just a human being like any other. Similarly, in the waking and dream states, Atman appears to be associated with a body and the senses and bearing names such as "Dehin, Jīva, Vijñānātma" and acts as the doer and experiencer. But in deep sleep, where there's no contact with these [notions], he remains purely as the Self (Atman). Just as a carpenter might experience fatigue while working but feels comfort when he stops, similarly, for the Jiva, even though there's sorrow in the waking and dream states due to the activities of the body, senses, and mind, in deep sleep, he experiences the eternal bliss of his true nature [nityānanda svarūpam] (BrS. 2-3-40).

In this state, Sruti says that the Jīva attains its own true nature, which is Brahman, indicating that the soul is actually Brahman (BrS. 3-2-7). In fact, merging with Brahman in that state of deep slumber is not the same as entering a city or a place because, in that state, we neither experience the presence of another distinct self nor do we feel we touched

that self. In waking and dream states, due to the association with upādhi [antaḥkaraṇa], one seems to be separate from the All-Witnessing Supreme Being. Yet, this upādhi disappears in deep sleep, hence it seems that one merges with that Supreme Witnessing Principle. With this understanding, Sruti says that a Jīva merges with Brahman. (BrS. 1-3-2, 1-3-7, 3-2-34). As mentioned earlier, when observing primarily through the upādhi that appears in the waking state due to ignorance, it may seem that even in states like deep sleep, death, and dissolution, this upādhi remains in a seed form. However, from the viewpoint of unbiased independent experience, there is no association with a secondary entity in deep sleep, and there is no doubt about this fact. The Srutis, therefore, declare that the union of Jīva-Brahman in this state [i.e., deep sleep] is an intrinsic relation [svarūpasaṃbandha] of being united with oneself (BrS. 3-2-35). However, not recognizing this underlying Reality [tattva], a Jīva under delusion thinks that he will rest for a while and then will awaken again. In order to get rid of that delusion, the Sruti says that a Jīva is awakened by the Supreme Being Itself (BrS. 3-2-8). Hence, by properly examining the three states [*avasthātraya*] and determining the underlying reality, ignorance which is the cause of the notion called Jīva [*upādhidharmādhyāsarūpa*] is eliminated through knowledge. This results in the attainment of eternal beatitude which is liberation.

6. Upāsana

Scriptural and Worldly standpoint [śāstradṛṣṭi - laukikadṛṣṭi]:

Until now, we've discussed the knowledge of the nature of Brahman-Atman. The scriptural standpoint [*śāstra dṛṣṭi*] is essential for the knowledge of Brahmātmasvarūpam. This is because one needs to intuit the nature of Brahman primarily through the scriptures (BrS. 1-1-3). When we say “Shastra”, it means the Vedas, which guide humans towards their goals. Nyāya and Mīmāṁsā which provide the explanations of the Vedic meanings, reinforced by logical reasoning and experiences are also colloquially termed as “Shastra”. The Vedas are generally divided into Karmakāṇḍa (ritualistic section) and Jñānakāṇḍa (knowledge section). In the Karmakāṇḍa, good conduct [uttamakarma] is prescribed which lead to virtuous results here or transmigrations into better lives while actions yielding undesirable outcomes are prohibited.

The Jñānakāṇḍa imparts the knowledge of Brahman which bestows the Paramapuruṣārtha, i.e., liberation [mukti], the eternal and ultimate goal of life. Thus, for souls, the Vedas provide the means to achieve two things: *Abhyudaya* (prosperity) and *Niśreyasa* (liberated from the sorrows of worldly existence). Because of these offerings, it's named the “Veda”. The means to achieve these ends cannot be known directly through sensory perceptions (Pratyaksha) or inference (Anumana). Therefore, those who seek these ultimate goals

must rely on the vision of the scriptures (*śāstra dṛṣṭi*) for their practice.

Difference between Jñāna and Dhyāna:

Some people believe that since rules or injunctions [*vidhi*] for good behavior and prohibitions are prescribed in the Karmakāṇḍa, that Jñānakāṇḍa must be the same and that knowledge is prescribed [vidhi] there. This is improper. The reason being that in the Vedas, the term "knowledge" (Jñāna) is used in two senses. As the scriptures describe, meditation involves focusing continuously on a single idea; this is a form of knowledge, often referred to as Upāsana (meditative worship). Knowledge, on the other hand, means recognizing an object as it [actually] is. Upāsana, as a means, is subordinate to knowledge because it depends on doership [*kartṛtva*]; he has the freedom to either engage in it or abandon it. That is why it is prescribed in the Shastras (BrS. 3-3-1). Knowledge is understanding things as they are, and when something is understood, there is no need to understand it further. Or if something cannot be understood, then it is impossible to understand it. Therefore, knowledge itself cannot be prescribed. Brahman (the Ultimate Reality) cannot be recognized by empirical means of knowledge such as direct perception, inference etc. It must be recognized solely through the scriptures. It's said in the scriptures that liberation (mukti) comes through this knowledge of Brahman alone.

Therefore, the statements of the Shruti [*śrutivākya*] that speak about the nature of Brahman are in proper coordination with Brahman itself (BrS. 1-1-4), which means that after gaining knowledge of Brahman, there's no further injunction in the scripture stating, “One should do this” or prohibition saying, “One should not do this.” Injunctions only exist in the meditative statements (UpAsanA vAkyas).
However, nowhere is it said that mere meditation leads directly to liberation.

Brahman who can be worshiped [*upāsyabrahma*]:

Brahman has been described as the ultimate reality or truth that is the Self within all of us. Even though in its essence, Brahman is formless and non-dual, That Absolute is considered as the cause behind the creation, preservation, and dissolution of the universe. When we understand this, we associate the qualities of the manifested universe [*viśeṣarūpa*] with it and bestow upon it a specific form. Due to ignorance, an individual soul (*jīva*) has confined himself with limited adjuncts [*upādhis*] like body, senses, and mind, etc., and is therefore aware of a much larger external world. Thus, the individual soul imagines the Supreme Reality [paratattva], combined with name and form, as being separate and identifies it as Ishwara (God). In fact, though Parameshwara is the essence of everything, but according to Shruti, it is prescribed that consciousness [Brahman] should be worshipped in conjunction with its highest upādhi as Ishwara, (BrS. 1-1-12). The individual sense of agency [*kartṛtva*] in the

world is granted by Ishwara, meaning by His permission he performs all actions in the sphere of saṃsāra and obtains their respective results (BrS. 2-3-41); Ishwara is the dispenser of the fruits of actions (BrS. 3.2.38-3.2.41), mere actions cannot yield results. Therefore, only through contemplating upon Him [as a means] can an individual be liberated from worldly bondage (BrS. 3-2-5).

Different forms of Upāsanās:

Upāsanās prescribed in Shruti are of two types viz. Brahmopāsanā and Pratikopāṣanā. Brahmopāsanā is direct worship of Brahman [e.g., ChUp. 3-14-1, also see AG. Tika]. Pratikopāṣanā is to worship Brahman with something else [a symbol, Āditya, Viṣṇu etc. see BrS. 4-1.4-5]. Some Pratīkas depend on particular actions as related to rituals, i.e karmāṅga upasana (BrS. 3-3-42). It is easier to understand these through examples.

In one Yajña, the Udgātṛ [priest] of chanting the Sama Veda worships Omkara ("Om") as possessing qualities (ChUp. 1-1-1). This upasana is known as *Udgīthopāsana* (BrS. 3-3-9). Since this "Om" is part of the ritual, it is considered a karma-angōpāsanā. Similarly, in Shruti, the deity [*prāṇa*] who relates to the Prastāva hymn performed in this Yajña should be worshipped as that Brahman (BrS. 1-1-23). It is also karma-angōpāsanā. The mind should be worshipped as Brahman, the sky should be worshipped as Brahman – even when one realizes a particular entity as different from Brahman, the

scripture prescribes to worship it as Brahman. These are Pratikopāṣanās (BrS. 4-1-4). Apart from these two types of worship, there are also Upāsanās which say that Brahman should be worshipped directly. For example, it is said [*śruti*] that the purusha, the golden person who is seen in the sun, and the Purusha within the eye should be worshipped as Brahman. Although Brahman is [essentially] formless, due to His grace He assumes a form for the devotee [*bhaktānugraha*], and therefore one should contemplate (worship) on that form. Therefore, it instructs to contemplate on that form, prescribing the worship of Brahman. Another example: All this is Brahman, arising from Brahman, dwelling in Brahman, and merging with Brahman. Hence, one should worship [contemplate] it quietly.

In the Chandogya Upanishad [*saptamo'dhyāyaḥ*] there is an Upāsanā, saying, that the Supreme Self should be contemplated as mind, prana, fire, will, etc. Even here, although direct Upāsanā on Brahman is instructed, it doesn't suggest contemplating on Brahman as something separate, as mentioned in the previous Upāsanā. Because all these [aspects] should be contemplated [considered] as one's own Self. Hence it is called “ahaṃgraha upāsanā”. Thus, the Śruti prescribes various forms of Upāsanā.

How to perform Upāsanās:

Upāsanās that are part of rituals should be performed in conjunction with those rituals. For other Upāsanās, one

should find a place where the mind can be focused, viz. dhyāna (BrS. 4-1-11), choose an appropriate seating posture, (BrS. 4-1-7). One should choose a specific type of Upāsanā (BrS. 3-3-59) and perform it continuously (BrS. 4-1-12) throughout his life. Additionally, one should assimilate all the topics related to Upāsanā mentioned across the Vedas (BrS. 3-3-3) and contemplate upon them.

Results of Upāsanās:

Different results are mentioned in the Shruti for Karmāṅga-Upāsanās and Pratikopāṣanās. Consequently, they each yield specific outcomes. The worshippers of Brahman [brahmopāsaka] gradually proceed on the path known as the *Arcirādi Mārga* or *Devayāna* (BrS. 4-3-1) and finally attain the Brahmaloka (BrS. 4-3-7). Parameshwara in this loka [i.e., Brahmaloka] is known as *Hiraṇyagarbha*. Since Brahmaloka is *sāttvika*, by deliberating on the Reality there, at the time of the (cosmic) dissolution, one attains liberation through the knowledge of Brahman, (BrS. 4-3-10). Therefore, liberation obtained by Upāsanā and [finally] through knowledge over a period is called Krama-Mukti.

Who are eligible for Upāsanā?

This matter should be resolved similarly to what we discussed previously regarding Brahmajñāna (knowledge of the Absolute). That is, since the Vedas describe these Upāsanās, those who are eligible to study the Vedas and to perform the

rites mentioned in them are the ones eligible for these meditations. Thus, the Dvijas (twice born) are the eligible ones for Upāsanā.
However, since Brahman exists as the Self in all, the worship of Parameshwara can also be performed by everyone, just as knowledge is accessible to everyone. This is the reason why in the Puranas, etc., not only is the nature of the Supreme Reality [paramātmatattva] discussed, but also how to worship the Supreme Lord with devotion is described. Consequently, as mentioned in the Purāṇas and other scriptures, everyone is eligible to worship the Supreme Lord. Through this, they can achieve successive liberation [krama-mukti] and (finally) immediate liberation [sadyo-mukti] through knowledge.

Parabrahma – Aparabrahma:

Saguna Brahman, associated with qualities of the manifested world, is also called *Kāryabrahma* or *Aparabrahma*. The pure unqualified Brahman [Nirguna Brahman], devoid of upAdhis, is called *Kāraṇabrahma*, or *Parabrahma*. It is stated above that Upāsakas (devotees) first reach the *Kāryabrahma* and subsequently achieve successive liberation viz. Krama-Mukti. On the other hand, the *Tattvajñānis* who have recognized the Supreme Brahman [Parabrahma] through deliberation right here in this life, they don't need to go somewhere else to attain it (BrS. 4-3-7). The distinction we make between Parabrahma and Aparabrahma is purely from an ignorant perspective [*avidyādṛṣṭi*]; in reality, there are not two Brahmans. Brahman doesn't possess any true form or specific

attributes. Even the association with *upādhis* does not mean that Brahman is possessing them [*saviśeṣa*]. For the upādhis are merely products of ignorance, they are not truly real [pāramārthika]. Also, Sruti does not refer to Brahman as *saviśeṣa*. Because wherever the true nature of Brahman has been indicated, the Sruti says that Brahman is really *nirviśeṣa* (BrS. 3-2-11 to 3-2-14). Sruti vākyas that describe Brahman with a definite form [*sākāra*] or quality [*saguṇa*] are not there to explain the real nature of Brahman [*brahmasvarūpa*]; instead, they aim to prescribe certain Upāsanās. Hence, it must be ascertained that Brahman is of the nature of Pure Consciousness, *cinmātra* (BrS. 3-2-16), and any particular form attributed to it is like the reflection of the sun, caused by limiting adjuncts [upādhis] (BrS. 3-2-18). Nirviśeṣa Brahman is imperceptible and hence cannot be an object of the senses (BrS. 3-2-23). Through contemplating on the Supreme Lord, the seeker [*sādhaka*] recognizes that he is devoid of all phenomenal manifestations (BrS. 3-2-24).

Also, the distinction between one who contemplates, and the object of contemplation is due to conditioning adjuncts and not the absolute Truth (BrS. 3-2-25). That is why it is said in the Sruti that he who recognizes Brahman becomes Brahman (BrS. 3-2-26). It is also said that there is no other Self apart from the Supreme Self (BrS. 3-2-30).

7. Muktisādhana - Means to Liberation (Mukti)

Direct Means to Liberation:

Liberation [mukti] is essentially the nature of Brahman which is Atman. Hence, intuiting the Supreme Self [Paramātman] as our own Self is itself considered the direct means to achieve it. Recognizing Parameshwara [i.e., Brahman] as different from oneself can never be knowledge in the primary sense [*mukhyadṛṣṭi*]. The Srutis state that Atman is our [true] Self; In accordance with this statement, the Jnanis [adepts] perform worship, (BrS. 1-1-30), this is the scriptural perspective (BrS. 3-2-20). Hence knowledge [*vidyā*] alone is the direct means to liberation (BrS. 3-4-1 to 17), and no other aid is necessary. For gradual liberation [krama-mukti], knowledge of upāsanā is sufficient. While Sruti mentions that Jñānis were [seemingly] engaged in actions, they also state that there are Jñāni-renunciates [*saṃnyāsis*] who have renounced all duties. Thus, knowledge is not dependent on actions.

Paramparā Sādhanas towards Mukti:

It should be not be understood that actions (karma) are not at all required for liberation. Still, towards the attainment of knowledge, practices like yajñā (sacrifice), dāna (charity), and tapas (austerity) are essential, as mentioned in the scriptures (BrS. 3-4-26). Moreover, when one embraces the life of a saṃnyāsi, it is imperative to cultivate virtues like *śama*, *dama*,

etc. [*śamadamādi*] as indicated in Br.S. 3-4-27. Rituals like yajñā kindle the desire for knowledge; *śama*, *dama*, *titikṣa*, *uparati*, *śraddha*, *samādhāna* - these six [ṣaṭsampad] are proximate means for the arise of knowledge. Having renounced the three basic desires [*eṣaṇātraya*] and becoming a Sannyāsi after having acquired scholarship, one should try to live by means of (that strength which comes from) knowledge [ātmavijñāna]. Subsequently, one should adopt the purity of a child. After achieving such a state, one should observe Mauna and indulge in profound contemplation on the nature of the Self. The stages of *pāṇḍityaṃ*, child-like purity [*bālya*], and deep contemplation [*pāṇḍityaṃ bālyaṃ maunaṃ*] as referenced in Br.S. 3-4-47, are essential means to mature one's knowledge. Since sacrifices serve as a means through listening and other practices, one must continuously engage in listening, reflecting, and contemplation on the Truth until the Tattva is recognized, (BrS. 4-1-1, 4-1-2). For those who do not have the material means to be a part of āśrama (establishment) such as widowers etc. the knowledge of the Self is vouchsafed to them by following special acts, such as Japa, fasts, worship of deities etc. which are not opposed to their condition [i.e., not belonging to any order of life as widowers etc.] and which any person can perform. For such individuals, the actions performed in previous births also benefit in the present life (BrS. 3-4-38).

8. Phalavicāra - Discussion on the results

The fruits of *vidyā* in the form of *upāsanā* lead to krama-mukti (gradual liberation) while those of *jñāna* alone lead to sadyomukti (immediate liberation). This has already been stated. Now, a concise explanation of the results of these two types of vidyā is provided. There is no rule that says that if the means to knowledge [*jñānasādhana*] are practiced, their result, viz. this knowledge, will be obtained in this very life.

If the result of upāsanā is direct realization (*sākṣātkāra*), then it has indeed come to fruition for the practitioner. If, upon contemplation, the *Atmatattva* becomes clear, then it has borne fruit. But if there are any obstructions [on the seeker's part], this knowledge cannot be attained (BrS. 3-4-52).

If one doesn't consistently engage in upāsanā, it won't bear fruit. Similarly, means such as śravaṇa, etc., must be performed until the result is obtained; for this knowledge cannot be attained unless these [means] are performed regularly. Therefore, these *sādhanas* should be repeated until the final intuitive understanding is obtained (BrS. 4-1-1, except *uttamādhikāri*). If the result does not manifest in this lifetime, at least it will in the next life, because it is aided by the tendencies of [previous] sādhanas (BrS. 3-4-38).

For one who has attained the knowledge of Brahman [*brahmajñāna*], karma regarding the past or the future no longer yields any result. The results of past actions get

destroyed and the potential outcomes of future actions don't adhere to the Jnani. It is [also] mentioned in the Shruti that knowledge in the form of Upāsana leads to the cessation of the fruits of karma [i.e. nivṛtti marga].

Since the intuitive understanding of Brahman brings about the realization that "I am not a doer [*akartṛ*] in all three periods of time- past, present, and future"- it is therefore reasonable that the fruits of karma, will not reach a Jñāni, and they are only for those who are ignorant (BrS. 4-1-13, 4-1-14). Thus, while others may obtain another body after leaving the current one due to accumulated actions [*sañcita karma*], a Jnani does not acquire another body because he is liberated. However, just because one has attained knowledge, it doesn't mean that their *Prārabdha karma* ends immediately, and they leave the body. Since *Prārabdha karma* delivers its results, only after the experience of it is finished (BrS. 4-1-15) will the body of the Jnani leave him. For the knower of Brahman *Brahmajnani*, the body itself is considered to be mithyā (not real). Therefore, from the Jñāni's perspective, karma is already nullified. However, from the empirical viewpoint [*vyavahāradṛṣṭi*], once the experience of *Prārabdha karma* is over (BrS. 4-1-19), it is said that Jnani is [finally] liberated.

Even though all the merits (punya) accumulated in the past by the Jnani get destroyed, his daily rituals indeed lead [indirectly] to the result of liberation (BrS. 4-1-16). One who practices knowledge in the form of *upāsanā* [connected with

the qualified Brahman] also performs regular obligatory duties (nitya karma) along with that knowledge. However, he has no desire for any other results that may arise from these duties. Thus, his upāsanā and action combined bestow liberation upon him. Truly, liberation is not the result of any external effort, but it arises naturally from knowledge in subsequent lifetimes. Hence, the rituals and duties that lead to this knowledge are also causes for liberation. For the knower of Brahman, the regular duties he previously performed as a seeker give immediate results due to his knowledge. Therefore, it should be understood that when it's said that the sins and virtues of a knower are destroyed, it pertains specifically to desire-driven actions (kamya karma) as mentioned in (Br.S. 4-1-17). After attaining knowledge, liberation is unavoidable, but some *Mahāpuruṣas* are appointed by the Lord to their offices. So, it takes some time for their Prārabdha karma to decay. From their perspective, due to the annihilation of karma through true knowledge, they do not experience the sorrow of *saṃsāra* (BrS. 3-3-32). This is how the stories in the Puranas, etc. are to be understood, that Jnanis like Vasiṣṭha, Bhṛgu, Sanatkumāra, Dakṣa, Nārada also obtained rebirth. Since the fruit of Brahmajñāna, which is liberation, is directly experienced, these tales should not create doubt about whether liberation happens immediately upon gaining knowledge or not. A person who has attained liberation through *Saguna Vidyā*

[knowledge of qualified Brahman] has a mental body in Brahmaloka, and whenever desired, can have a physical body as well (BrS. 4-4-8, 4-4-12, 4-4-13), or things appear because of his volition alone (BrS. 4-4-8). He can imagine as many bodies as he desires and roam about (BrS. 4-4-15), he has no other Lord over him (BrS. 4-4-9). He rejoices and roams with bliss [bhogamātrameva], akin to the Lord (Ishwara) himself, (BrS. 4-4-21).

However, he does not have the authority to create, sustain, or dissolve the universe as this belongs to Parameshvara alone who is *Nityasiddha* (BrS. 4-4-17). This liberation with attributes (saguna mukti) is considered secondary [*gauṇamukti*]. As mentioned earlier, those who attain liberation in this manner will, at the end of the cosmic cycle [*kalpānta*], inevitably acquire the knowledge of Brahman and attain true liberation. Those who have dispelled wrong knowledge through the knowledge of Brahman have liberated themselves from the idea of having a body and have attained their own true nature. (BrS. 1-3-19, 4-4-1). This is the true liberation (BrS. 4-4-2); The Brahmasvarūpa they attain [recognize] is their Atman (BrS. 4-4-3); then there is no difference between them and Brahman (BrS. 4-4-4).

Those who are liberated have the nature of eternal Pure Consciousness [*caitanyamātrasvarūpa*] and there is nothing wrong with that. However, from the empirical viewpoint [*vyavahāradṛṣṭi*] they are omniscient, i.e., possessing Lordly

powers (BrS. 4-4-7). Whether one ascends to the world of Brahma [brahmloka] through *Saguna Upāsanā* via *Arcirādi* or *Devayāna mārga* and attains liberation through knowledge, or directly attains liberation, [either way] since liberation is the intuition of one's eternally true nature, those who are liberated do not return to the cycle of existence again (BrS. 4-4-22); they are forever free.

The outcome of the means to knowledge [*jñānasādhanas*] is proportional to its potency, and it bears fruit either in this life or the next, as previously stated. But there is no difference in the liberation itself which arises from knowledge. In the knowledge of the qualified Brahman, i.e., in rituals, due to the contemplation of various qualities [Saguna Upāsanā], there can be gradation in the results. But whenever and wherever knowledge arises, its result, liberation, is of the same nature (BrS. 3-4-52). For, liberation is essentially (being) the eternal bliss of Brahman. Brahman exists as only one Reality, and it can't have any gradations of more or less.

Therefore, Liberation [mukti] is of uniform nature.

OM TAT SAT